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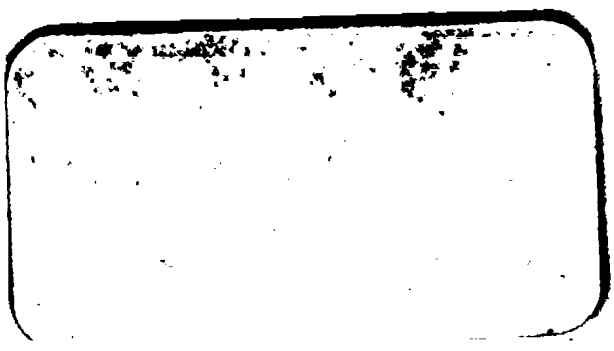

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ONE-HOSS SHAY

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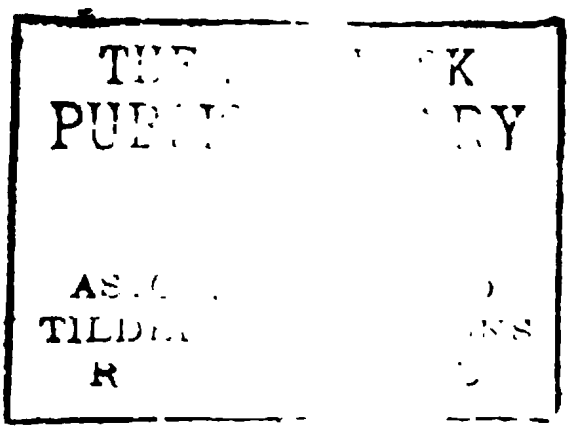

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"THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE STRONG AND SOUND." —*Page* 32.

Collection of "Masterpieces"

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

The Wonderful "One-Hoss-Shay"

(Reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* of September, 1858)

And Other Poems

With numerous original illustrations by

THOMAS McILVAINE

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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The Wonderful "One-Hoss-Shay."

THE DEACON'S MASTER-PIECE:

OR THE WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS-SHAY."

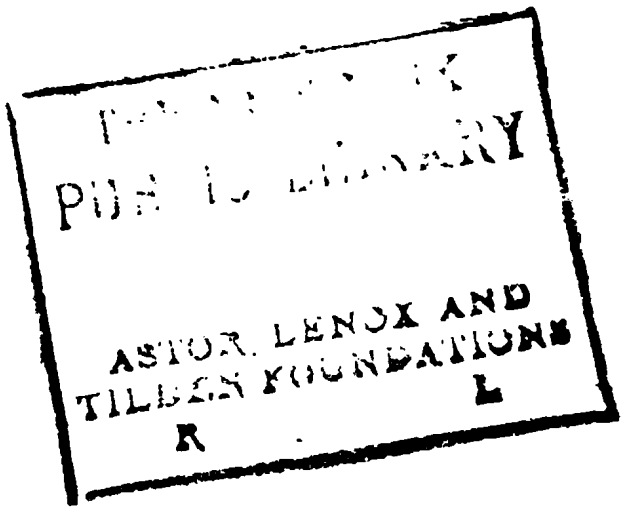
A LOGICAL STORY.

HAVE you heard of the wonderful one-hoss-shay,
That was built in such a logical way?
It ran a hundred years to a day,
And then, of a sudden, it——ah, but stay,
I'll tell you what happened without delay,
Scaring the parson into fits,

Frightening people out of their wits,—
Have you ever heard of that, I say?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five.
Georgius Secundus was then alive,—
Snuffy old drone from the German hive!
That was the year when Lisbon-town
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,
And Braddock's army was done so brown,
Left without a scalp to its crown.

"Braddock's army was
done so brown."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It was on the terrible Earthquake-day
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss-shay.

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot,--
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace,—lurking still
Find it somewhere you must and will,—

Above or below, or within or without,—
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,
A chaise *breaks down*, but doesn't *wear out*.

But the Deacon swore (as Deacons do
With an "I dew vum," or an "I tell *yeou*,")
He would build one shay to beat the taown
'n' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';

"I dew vum."

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It should be so built that it *couldn'*
break daown :
—" Fur," said the Deacon, " 't's
mighty plain
Thut the weakes' place mus'
stan' the strain ;
'n' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,
Is only jest
To make that place uz strong uz
the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the
village folk
Where he could find the strong-
est oak,

That couldn't be split nor bent
nor broke,—
That was for spokes and floor
and sills;
He sent for lancewood to make
the thills;
The crossbars were ash, from the
straightest trees;
The panels of white-wood, that
cuts like cheese,
But lasts like iron for things like
these;
The hubs of logs from the "Set-
tler's ellum,"
Last of its timber,—they couldn't
sell 'em,—

"So the Deacon inquired of the village folk.

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Never an axe had seen their chips,
And the wedges flew from between their lips,
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,
Steel of the finest, bright and blue;
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide;
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide

Found in the pit when the tanner
died.
That was the way he "put her
through."—
"There!" said the Deacon,
"naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess
She was a wonder, and nothing
less!
Colts grew horses, beards turned
gray,
Deacon and deaconess dropped
away,
Children and grandchildren—
where were they?

But there stood the stout old one-
hoss-shay
As fresh as on Lisbon-earth-
quake-day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED;—it came
and found
The Deacon's Masterpiece strong
and sound.
Eighteen hundred increased by
ten;
"Hahnsum kerridge" they called
it then.
Eighteen hundred and twenty
came;—
Running as usual; much the
same.
Thirty and forty at last arrive,
And then came fifty, and FIFTY-
FIVE.

Little of all we value here
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year
Without both feeling and looking queer.
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.
(This is a moral that runs at large;
Take it.—You're welcome.—No extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER - the
Earthquake-day.—
There are traces of age in the
one-hoss-shay,
A general flavor of mild decay,
But nothing local, as one may
say.
There couldn't be,—for the Dea-
con's art
Had made it so like in every part
That there wasn't a chance for
one to start.

For the wheels were just as
strong as the thills.

And the floor was just as strong
as the sills,
And the panels just as strong as
the floor,
And the whippletree neither less,
nor more.
And the back-crossbar as strong
as the fore,
And spring and axle and hub
encore.
And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a
doubt
In another hour it will be *worn
out!*

First of November, 'Fifty-five!
This morning the parson takes a
drive.

Now, small boys, get out of the
way!
Here comes the wonderful one
hoss-shay,
Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-
necked bay.
"Huddup!" said the parson.—
Off went they.

The parson was working his Sun
day's text,—
Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped
perplexed
At what the—Moses—was com
ing next.
All at once the horse stood still,
Close by the meet'n'-house on
the hill.

"The Parson takes a drive."

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First a shiver, and then a thrill,
Then something decidedly like a spill,—
And the parson was sitting upon a rock,
At half-past nine by the meet'n'-house-clock,—
Just the hour of the Earthquake-shock!

—What do you think the parson found,
When he got up and stared around?
The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,
As if it had been to the mill and ground!

You see, of course, if you're not
a dunce,
How it went to pieces all at
once,—
All at once, and nothing first,—
Just as bubbles do when they
burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss
shay.
Logic is logic. That's all I say.

"When he got up and stared around."

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On Lending a Punch-Bowl.

"This ancient silver
bowl of mine."

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ON LENDING A PUNCH-BOWL.

THIS ancient silver bowl of mine
—it tells of good old times,
Of joyous days and jolly nights,
and merry Christmas chimes;
They were a free and jovial race,
but honest, brave and true,
That dipped their ladle in the
punch when this old bowl
was new.

A Spanish galleon brought the
bar—so runs the ancient
tale—
'Twas hammered by an Antwerp
smith, whose arm was like a
flail;
And now and then between the
strokes, for fear his strength
should fail,
He wiped his brow, and quaffed
a cup of good old Flemish ale.

'Twas purchased by an English
squire to please his loving
dame,
Who saw the cherubs, and con-
ceived a longing for the
same;

"Jolly nights."

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"And quaffed a cup of
good old Flemish
ale."

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And oft, as on the ancient stock
another twig was found,
'Twas filled with caudle spiced
and hot, and handed smoking round.

But, changing hands, it reached
at length a Puritan divine,
Who used to follow Timothy,
and take a little wine,
But hated punch and prelacy;
and so it was, perhaps,
He went to Leyden, where he
found conventicles and schnaps.

"With those that in the Mayflower came."

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And then, of course, you know
what's next, — it left the
Dutchman's shore
With those that in the Mayflower
came,—a hundred souls and
more,—
Along with all the furniture, to
fill their new abodes,—
To judge by what is still on
hand, at least a hundred
loads,

'Twas on a dreary winter's eve,
the night was closing dim,
When old Miles Standish took
the bowl, and filled it to the
brim;

"Stirred the posset
with his sword."

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The little Captain stood and stirred the posset with his sword,
And all his sturdy men-at-arms were ranged about the board.

He poured the fiery Hollands in,—the man that never feared,—
He took a long and solemn draught, and wiped his yellow beard;
And one by one the musketeers,—the men that fought and prayed,—
All drank as 'twere their mother's milk, and not a man afraid.

That night, affrighted from his
nest, the screaming eagle
flew,
He heard the Pequot's ringing
whoop, the soldier's wild
halloo;
And there the sachem learned
the rule he taught to kith and
kin:
"Run from the white man when
you find he smells of Hol-
lands gin!"

A hundred years, and fifty more,
had spread their leaves and
snows,
A thousand rubs had flattened
down each little cherub's
nose;

When once again the bowl was
filled, but not in mirth or
joy,
'Twas mingled by a mother's
hand to cheer her parting
boy.

Drink, John, she said, 'twill do
you good—poor child, you'll
never bear
This working in the dismal
trench, out in the midnight
air,
And if—God bless me—you were
hurt, 'twould keep away the
chill;
So John *did* drink—and well he
wrought that night at Bun-
ker's Hill!

"A mother's hand to
cheer her parting
boy."

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I tell you, there was generous
warmth in good old English
cheer;
I tell you, 'twas a pleasant
thought to bring its symbol
here;
'Tis but the fool that loves excess
—hast thou a drunken soul,
Thy bane is in thy shallow skull,
not in my silver bowl!

I love the memory of the past—
its pressed yet fragrant flow-
ers—
The moss that clothes its broken
walls—the ivy on its towers—

Nay, this poor bauble it be-
queathed — my eyes grow
moist and dim,

"ITS BROKEN WALLS."

To think of all the vanished joys
that danced around its brim.

Then fill a fair and honest cup,
and bear it straight to me;
The goblet hallows all it holds,
whate'er the liquid be;
And may the cherubs on its face
protect me from the sin,
That dooms one to those dread-
ful words—"My dear, where
have you been?"

The Last Leaf.

THE LAST LEAF.

I SAW him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,

Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom,

"As he totters o'er the ground with his cane."

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"In his prime."

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And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

"THE PRUNING-KNIFE OF TIME."

My grandmamma has said,
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago,—

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That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;

"By the Crier on his round."

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But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,—
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling

"The mossy marbles
rest."

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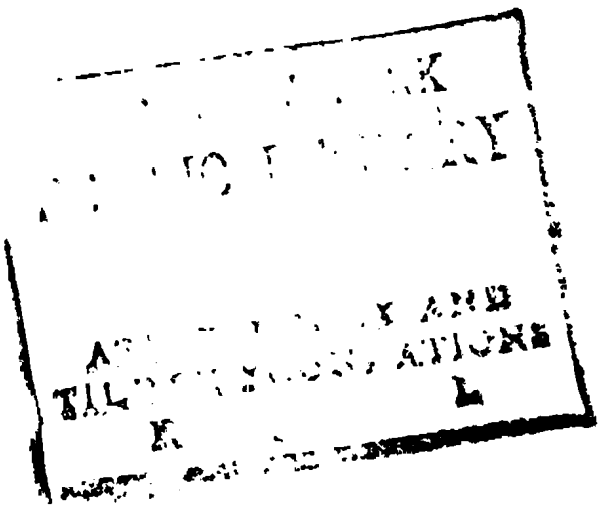
"The lips that he has
prest."



The Star and the Water-Lily.

THE STAR AND THE WATER-LILY.

THE sun stepped down from his golden throne,
And lay in the silent sea,
And the Lily had folded her satin leaves,
For a sleepy thing was she;

What is the Lily dreaming of?
Why crisp the waters blue?
See, see, she is lifting her varnished lid!
Her white leaves are glistening through!

The Rose is cooling his burning
cheek
In the lap of the breathless
tide;—
The Lily hath sisters fresh and
fair,
That would lie by the Rose's
side;

He would love her better than all
the rest,
And he would be fond and
true;—
But the Lily unfolded her weary
lids,
And looked at the sky so blue.

"My Grandmamma has said."

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Remember, remember, thou silly one,
How fast will thy Summer glide,
And wilt thou wither a virgin pale,
Or flourish a blooming bride?

"O the Rose is old, and thorny, and cold,
And he lives on earth," said she;
"But the Star is fair and he lives in the air.
And he shall my bridegroom be."

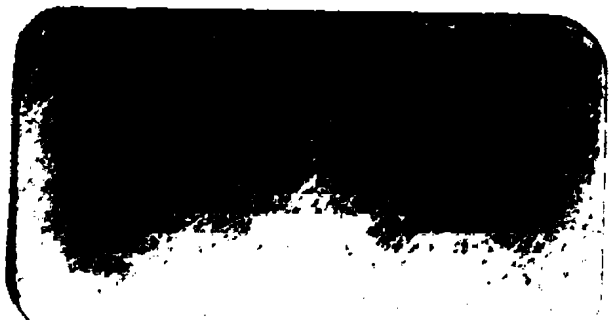
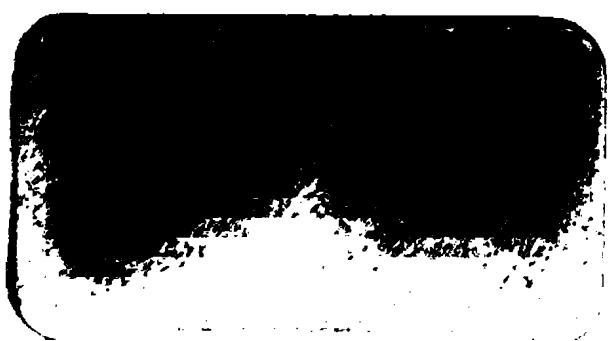
But what if the stormy cloud
should come,
And ruffle the silver sea?
Would he turn his eye from the
distant sky,
To smile on a thing like thee?

O no, fair Lily, he will not send
One ray from his far-off
throne;
The winds shall blow and the
waves shall flow,
And thou wilt be left alone.

There is not a leaf on the mountain top,
Nor a drop of evening dew,
Nor a golden sand on the sparkling shore,
Nor a pearl in the waters blue,

That he has not cheered with his fickle smile,
And warmed with his faithless beam,—
And will he be true to a pallid flower,
That floats on the quiet stream?

Alas for the Lily! she would not
heed,
But turned to the skies afar,
And bared her breast to the
trembling ray
That shot from the rising star;

The cloud came over the dark-
ened sky,
And over the waters wide:
She looked in vain through the
beating rain,
And sank in the stormy tide.

The End.